

HB 1794 - DIGEST

(SUBSTITUTED FOR - SEE 2ND SUB)

Finds that, the higher education coordinating board has developed a strategic master plan for higher education that sets a goal of increasing the number of students who earn college degrees at all levels: Associate, baccalaureate, and graduate. The strategic master plan also sets a goal to increase the higher education system's responsiveness to the state's economic needs.

Finds that to meet both of the master plan's goals and to provide adequate educational opportunities for Washington's citizens, additional access is needed to baccalaureate degree programs. Expansion of the four campuses is one strategy for achieving the desired outcomes of the master plan. Other strategies must also be implemented through service delivery models that reflect both regional demands and statewide priorities.

Declares an intent to increase baccalaureate access and encourage economic development through overall expansion of upper division capacity, continued development of two plus two programs in some areas of the state, authorization of four-year university programs in other areas of the state, and creation of new types of baccalaureate programs on a pilot basis. These steps will make significant progress toward achieving the master plan goals, but the legislature will also continue to monitor the development of the higher education system and evaluate what additional changes or expansion may be necessary.

Finds that access to baccalaureate and graduate degree programs continues to be limited for residents of North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties. Studies conducted by the state board for community and technical colleges, the higher education coordinating board, and the council of presidents confirm that enrollment in higher education in this geographic region lags enrollment in other parts of the state, particularly for upper division courses leading to advanced degrees.

Declares an intent to refocus the consortium by assigning management and leadership responsibility for consortium operations to Everett Community College. Everett Community College shall collaborate with community and business leaders, other local community colleges, the regional universities, and The Evergreen State College to develop an educational plan for the North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit county region based on the university center model. The plan should provide for coordinated delivery of lower and upper division courses, expanded availability of high demand degree and certificate programs in the region, and a timeline and cost estimates for moving the physical location of the consortium to the college campus. The college shall submit preliminary recommendations to the higher education and fiscal committees of the legislature by December 1, 2005.

Requires the higher education coordinating board to define potential outcomes resulting from this act and develop performance measures for those outcomes, including but not limited to increased numbers of baccalaureate degrees awarded; expansion of upper division and graduate capacity at the University of Washington

Bothell and Tacoma and Washington State University Tri-Cities and Vancouver; enhanced regional access to baccalaureate programs; and creation and award of applied baccalaureate degrees. The board shall provide a progress report on the outcomes to the higher education committees of the senate and the house of representatives by December 1, 2008.

Expires July 1, 2009.